

[ HYPERLINK  
**MRN:** "http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2218%20RABAT%2026%22" ]  
**Date/DTG** : Jan 08, 2018 / 081432Z JAN 18  
**From:** AMEMBASSY RABAT  
**Action:** WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*  
**E.O.:** 13526  
**TAGS:** BEXP, BTIO, EAID, ECON, EIND, EINV, EMIN, ENRG, EPA, EPET, ETRD, KGHG, MA, OVIP, PGOV, PREL, SENV  
**Captions:** SENSITIVE  
**Subject:** Morocco: EPA Administrator Pruitt Promotes U.S. Energy and Environmental Technology Exports during December 11-13 Visit

1. (SBU) **Summary:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt discussed U.S. priorities for updating the environmental cooperation workplan under the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement and promoted U.S. exports and business solutions, particularly for liquefied natural gas (LNG), biofuels, and waste management, in meetings with Moroccan ministers and senior officials during a December 11-13 visit to Rabat and Marrakesh. Minister of Energy, Mines, and Sustainable Development Aziz Rabbah, Minister of Justice Mohammad Aujjar, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mounia Boucetta underscored to Administrator Pruitt—the first member of the Cabinet to visit Morocco under the Trump Administration—that Moroccan-U.S. relations remained strong, notwithstanding recent disagreements in policy over the Paris Agreement on climate change and Jerusalem. Administrator Pruitt advised Rabbah to consider U.S. technologies for Morocco's energy needs, including for the upcoming LNG tender, and for waste management and renewable energy solutions. Administrator Pruitt reiterated these messages to officials at Moroccan renewable energy institutions in meetings to discuss the Kingdom's energy goals. **End Summary.**

#### **Administrator Discusses Moroccan Renewable Energy Goals**

2. (U) During his December 11-13 visit to Morocco, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt held his first meeting with Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy (MASEN) Executive Board Member Obaid Amrane, Director for Strategic Pilot Projects Fatima Hamdouch, and Head of Infrastructure Nadia Taobane. In the December 11 meeting, Amrane and Hamdouch provided an overview of MASEN's evolution from initially focusing only on solar energy to leading the charge for Morocco's ambitious renewable energy strategy, which aims to reach 50 percent of Morocco's installed power generation capacity from renewable sources by 2030. Amrane noted that in 2009 Morocco realized it needed to shift towards renewables as the country's high dependence on imported energy and scant domestic hydrocarbon resources made the national economy vulnerable to price shocks in

international oil markets. Due to Morocco's rich potential in solar energy, the number of applications for renewable energy is enormous and could have far-reaching social and economic implications. Hamdouch outlined for Administrator Pruitt Morocco's plans to develop solar, wind, and hydro over the next decade as the main sources of renewable energy to reach the 2030 target. Administrator Pruitt suggested Morocco could also look to biofuels as a source of renewable energy and mentioned that many U.S. biofuel companies would be interested in working with Morocco, to which the Moroccans responded positively.

3. (U) Taobane presented Morocco's legal framework that supports the renewable energy goals and strategic directions to the U.S. delegation. Morocco has envisioned an integrated approach, with the government providing land and acting as the sole lender to companies interested in bidding on tenders. Taobane noted this approach would reduce risks and keep premiums low, as the government intends to uphold the most stringent standards for bidders. She emphasized Morocco's vision to create local development activities—including training programs and jobs for youth—around its renewable energy projects, particularly its solar infrastructure. Taobane mentioned that each solar site was distinct in Morocco, as opposed to countries like Spain that have deployed uniform models. Designs are tailored to account for local conditions and energy storage needs. Ultimately, Morocco aims to build 6,000 megawatts (MW) of new solar capacity by 2030, with these new plants boasting up to seven hours of energy storage. Amrane added that Morocco hoped to export its energy successes to the rest of Africa, and that they were already assisting several African countries.

#### **Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Suggests U.S.-Moroccan Partnerships for Africa**

4. (U) In a December 12 meeting with Administrator Pruitt, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mounia Boucetta welcomed the visit as a demonstration of the strong U.S.-Moroccan partnership. She provided an overview of Morocco's recent political and economic evolution, dating from the 2011 constitutional reform, and highlighted Morocco's achievements, including a strong and growing economy and political stability. Boucetta added that Morocco stands out among its North African neighbors, having invested in a democratic system that respects human rights and the rights of women and children. Morocco has also devoted energy to countering radicalism, by focusing both on security and economic and social stability, she said. The Secretary of State mentioned Morocco's elevated interest in Africa, a "win-win partnership" in both economic and political terms, which resulted this year in Morocco's return to the African Union after a 34-year hiatus and its application to join ECOWAS. She encouraged the Administrator to view Morocco as a potential platform to Africa. She noted that Morocco was the largest African investor in West Africa and second largest investor in Africa overall, providing capacity training in a variety of African countries. Given African needs across a variety of sectors, including transportation, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, banking, insurance, and telecommunications, Boucetta offered that Morocco could potentially partner with the United States in financing development in these areas. She highlighted Morocco's pipeline project with Nigeria that would cross 12 countries in West Africa. She stated the project was currently undergoing a feasibility study to determine legal, financial and technical aspects that could take up to two years to

complete. Administrator Pruitt thanked the Secretary of State for her hospitality and noted the Environmental Working Group meeting in February which will discuss new areas of cooperation. He encouraged future meetings to discuss potential U.S.-Moroccan cooperation in Africa, including environmental infrastructure and technologies in areas such as water management, food waste, security, and energy.

#### **Administrator and Minister of Energy Discuss Climate, Natural Gas, and Waste Management**

5. (SBU) Moroccan Minister of Energy, Mines, and Sustainable Development Aziz Rabbah voiced his government's desire for the USG to reverse its stance on the Paris Agreement in a December 12 meeting with Administrator Pruitt. Rabbah stated that the Moroccan government was closely monitoring the USG's position on climate change and that Morocco was "proud to be a leader" having hosted COP-22 last year and promoting its proactive stance in adopting renewable energy and carbon emissions reductions targets. However, he also emphasized that regardless of the U.S. position on the Paris Agreement, Morocco remained committed to working with the United States on shared priorities including environmental protection, adopting cleaner energy sources, using technology to enhance energy efficiency and waste recycling, protecting maritime ecosystems, water conservation, and forestry management. Rabbah observed that U.S. and Moroccan policies were largely complimentary, with the exception of the December 6 announcement on Jerusalem; however, he noted that this topic was not the focus of discussions with the EPA delegation. Rabbah explained that Morocco took into account the effects of its clean energy policies on economic growth, but with the view that growth "should not be at the expense of humanity" and should focus on finding areas of convergence between the interests of corporations and environmental protection. Referring to this compatibility as a "transformational economy," he pointed out the United States' unique ability to contribute to the research, development, and adoption of "transformational" technology as the world's leader in laboratory facilities, scientific knowledge, and hubs for innovation.

6. (U) Administrator Pruitt agreed with the minister that resource extraction and environmental protection could be compatible, and he welcomed future prospects for U.S.-Moroccan collaboration. He highlighted the potential for the United States to export LNG and/or ethanol to Morocco as an opportunity for the U.S. economy, as well as for Morocco to adopt a cleaner source of energy to complement its renewable strategy. Using the example of Harvest Power in Florida, which has contracted with Walt Disney World to generate clean energy from food waste biomass produced at the theme park, Administrator Pruitt emphasized that using technology to reduce emissions was the best approach to clean energy.

7. (U) Rabbah expressed an interest in learning more about U.S. technology, urging more commercial exchanges so that Morocco could continue to learn about the most innovative options. He emphasized the new national strategy for energy efficiency, currently being considered by the Council of Ministers,

would require technological solutions to achieve its ambitious goals. The minister hoped the strategy would be enacted in 2018, and he said it formed a part of Morocco's larger pursuit of a "circular economy" in which nearly all waste would be recycled. As an example, Rabbah cited a project in Marrakesh that used wastewater for energy production. Both Rabbah and Administrator Pruitt also identified other areas for potential U.S.-Moroccan collaboration under the revised environmental work plan, including academic partnerships between universities and sharing technological solutions for waste management, desalinization, and energy innovation. Administrator Pruitt also expressed interest in continuing collaboration on solid waste management, public participation and crisis communication, as well as environmental enforcement and rule of law.

### **Minister of Justice Welcomes USG Collaboration and Seeks Further Visits**

8. (SBU) Minister of Justice Mohamed Aujjar expressed appreciation for the very positive strategic and enduring partnership between Morocco and the United States in a December 12 meeting with Administrator Pruitt. He stated the United States and Morocco would remain strong allies despite occasional criticisms, such as over the December 6 Jerusalem announcement. He stressed that Morocco was a moderate Muslim country dedicated to democratic principles and fighting radical extremism, which also aimed to be a leader in Africa, working with other African nations to fight terrorism and extremism and promote economic development. Aujjar emphasized that Morocco was undergoing a fundamental change in its judicial system, which he believed would create a more independent judiciary. Aujjar thanked the USG for the extensive and continuing collaboration that has helped to develop and support these justice sector reforms and stated that he welcomed the continuation of these programs.

9. (U) Addressing environmental issues, Aujjar described how Morocco was pushing a green economy, investing heavily in renewable energy, and developing the largest solar energy facilities on the continent. He offered that Morocco was developing a number of projects with other African countries, including the construction of a gas pipeline from Nigeria to Morocco. He stated that Morocco had created a positive climate for investment by striving to ensure its laws, policies, and security environment were fully compliant with the highest international norms and standards. The minister pointed to companies from China and Europe doing business in Morocco and expressed hope that U.S. companies would increase their investments in the country. Administrator Pruitt noted that as a hub for commerce in Africa, Morocco has tremendous influence over African affairs, adding that the country's reforms were extremely important to attracting and retaining investor interest. He discussed the importance of rule of law and noted that EPA can provide assistance on environmental crimes and environmental police under the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement. Aujjar expressed the desire for other Cabinet-level officials from the United States, particularly the Attorney General, to visit Morocco in order to further joint cooperation initiatives. Administrator Pruitt promised that he would take that

message to his counterparts, and that he looked forward to further engagement with the Ministry and other sectors of the Moroccan government.

#### **Moroccan and U.S. Solar Energy Technologies at Ben Guerir Green Energy Park**

10. (U) Director General of the Research Institute for Solar Energy and New Energies (IRESEN) Badr Ikken showcased the institute's initiatives to develop and adapt solar energy solutions to the unique climate conditions in the Moroccan desert, during Administrator Pruitt's December 12 visit to the Green Energy Park in Ben Guerir, about 50 miles north of Marrakesh. Currently one MW of various photovoltaic and concentrating solar power technologies are installed at the park, which IRESEN uses to power its own operations—including an on-site small-scale desalination facility—and test the different platforms for dust accumulation, water usage, response to extreme temperatures, and other variables that can affect power output efficiencies. Some of the technologies on display had achieved local integration rates of up to 90 percent of Moroccan content, though photovoltaic products from U.S. firms SunPower and FirstSolar were also installed, he added. Administrator Pruitt noted that the technologies displayed and Green Energy Park's research facilities were impressive, and he mentioned that many U.S. companies were at the forefront of the desalination and water treatment sectors.

11. (U) OCP Group Chairman Mostafa Terrab provided an overview of the company's history, organizational operations and business objectives. OCP is one of the world's leading exporters of phosphate rock, phosphoric acid and phosphate fertilizers, and Morocco possesses 80 percent of the world's phosphates reserves. The Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Ben Guerir is at the center of OCP, according to Terrab. The university provides training, research and development and has partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Columbia University, and Penn State University. Terrab said OCP sees engineering services as a new growth area and has a joint venture with Jacobs Engineering in Africa, and another joint venture with Dupont and IBM. The chairman noted OCP believes Morocco is strongly positioned as the gateway to Africa and can address Africa's food security, water, and other environmental challenges. For example, 60 percent of Africa's land is arable, and Morocco can bring fertilizer investments to increase food production. OCP is partnering with MIT to organize a science and technology forum for Africa next year and is also working with multilateral development banks. OCP noted its interest in ammonia and is looking at the experiences of a shale gas plant in Pennsylvania. Administrator Pruitt offered assistance with information on U.S. shale gas.

12. (U) The EPA Administrator's Office cleared this cable.